United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General deplores killing of staff member of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees yesterday in Ethiopia -- the second slaying of UNHCR staff in less than a month.

+ Military component of United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia currently numbers 2,789 personnel; another 4,000 expected to arrive over next three weeks.

+ Preparatory Committee for United Nations Conference on Environment and Development hears African proposal for convention on drought and desertification; adopts three new chapters of "Agenda 21".

+ New United Nations study shows that emerging international legal instruments on environment will have increasing impact on activities and operations of transnational corporations.

+ Kuwait pays $2.3 million for its projected share of expenditure of Boundary Demarcation Commission and $2 million for costs incurred with respect to return of Kuwaiti properties.

+ Preparatory Committee for 1993 World Conference on Human Rights urged to consider promotion and protection of human rights since 1948 Universal Declaration and improvements that could be made.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed deep regret over the death of Lourenco Mutaca, an international staff member serving with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), during an armed attack yesterday while he was on mission to Gode, Ethiopia.

In a statement issued through his Spokesman, the Secretary-General said the tragic event "highlights once again the dangers faced by United Nations staff members participating in humanitarian operations who risk their lives in the search for peace in strife-torn parts of the world". He urged government authorities to make every efforts to ensure the safety of such staff.

(more)

Mr. Mutaca was the head of the UNCHR sub-office in Dire Dawa, in eastern Ethiopia, involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Ethiopia.

According to a press release issued by the UNHCR today, the 56-year-old Mozambican was attacked by four gunmen as he was entering a vehicle. Operations in the area had been suspended and most United Nations staff withdrawn pending a review of security conditions.

The UNHCR said the incident brought to 15 the number of relief workers killed in the country during the last seven months and further highlighted the personal risks taken by those trying to deliver humanitarian assistance throughout the deeply troubled Horn of Africa region.

The incident is the second slaying of UNHCR staff in less than a month. On 11 March, Tekuye Muhe, a UNHCR guard, was killed while trying to defend the Organization's Jijiga office from bandits.

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With another 4,000 military personnel expected to arrive over the next three weeks, the military component of United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) numbers currently 2,789 men, according to a UNTAC spokesman. The Force will require a strength of over 15,800 persons of all ranks to carry out its assigned tasks.

To date, over 1,100 UNTAC military personnel were deployed in Phnom Penh; over 1,500 in Battambang and the remaining 152 in six other locations.

The UNTAC spokesman further reported that the deployment of the military component would take place progressively, starting with the early deployment of essential engineer units to continue and expand the mine programme and to undertake rehabilitation of infrastructure, followed by the arrival of units to establish a firm logistic base for UNTAC. This process would culminate in the deployment of almost all the remaining military personnel one week prior to the start of the second phase of the cease-fire.

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An appeal has been made to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), now meeting at Headquarters, for emergency measures to address the worst droughts ever, currently afflicting the whole southern African sub-region.

Addressing the Committee yesterday, H.M. Murerwa, Minister for Environment and Tourism of Zimbabwe, urged all delegations, especially those from the developed countries, to support the African proposal for a convention on drought and desertification. He also supported the inclusion in "Agenda 21" of measures to increase the understanding of the impact of climate change.

(more)

During the meeting, the Committee also adopted three new chapters of "Agenda 21" -- a comprehensive plan of action extending into the twenty-first century proposed for adoption by the Earth Summit in Rio. The Chapters relate to human settlements; education, public awareness and training; and information for decision-making. The Committee also adopted a chapter on environmentally sound management of solid wastes.

Other chapters adopted by the Preparatory Committee concern the relationship between the environment and the economy, sustainable mountain development, and science for sustainable development. The Committee has also recommended to the General Assembly that the Rio Conference be moved from 1 to 12 June to 3 to 14 June in consideration of the Muslim Feast of Ed-El-Ah.

The Preparatory Committee winds up its month-long session on Friday, 3 April.

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According to a new study just released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development, emerging international legal instruments on environment will have increasing impact on the activities and operations of transnational corporations. The report surveys recent developments in environmental law and policy at the international and regional levels.

The study concludes that activity in that area, although uneven, has produced instruments increasingly detailed in their specificity and standards which are more stringent in their effect. It notes that the "trend is indicated by the highly developed, comprehensive and detailed rules of European Community environmental law, which grew out of a trade and economic treaty".

The study points out that although developments in global and regional environmental law have not yet led to the widespread adoption by developed and developing countries of internationally harmonized minimum standards, the trend towards integration of environmental concerns into mainstream international economic and trade law and policy may ultimately point to that result.

The study seeks to provide the necessary information and assist transnational corporations and international organizations in fulfilling legal and ethical obligations with respect to the wide range of existing and emerging environmental instruments and policies.

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The Kuwaiti Permanent representative to the United Nations, Mohammad A. Abulhassan, has given the Secretary-General two checks from the State of Kuwait, according to Spokesman Francois Giuliani. One check, for $2,313,000, represents Kuwait's projected share of the expenditure incurred for the work

of the Boundary Demarcation Commission through the end of June this year. The second check, for $2 million, covers projected expenditures incurred with respect to return of Kuwaiti properties.

The Boundary Demarcation Commission, set up by the Security Council's cease-fire resolution to end the Persian Gulf war, will meet in New York from 8 to 16 April to review results of surveying and mapping recently carried out, as well as to address actual demarcation of the boundary between Kuwait and Iraq.

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In Geneva on Monday, 30 March, the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, Antoine Blanca, told the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights that every day, more and more appeals were being made to the United Nations to encourage and promote human rights. Mr. Blanca, who is the Secretary-General of the Conference, said the event would serve as a major forum to ensure that human rights would be better respected in the future.

According to Mr. Blanca, the Conference would take place in a larger context of a revitalized United Nations. He suggested that the Preparatory Committee focus on three or four major questions, such as the promotion and protection of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration; improvements that could be made; the issue of development and its relationship to human rights; and recommendations for the future, focusing on the place of human rights within the United Nations system and on procedures, mechanisms and resources.

The Committee is continuing preparations for the World Conference in accordance with goals set out under General Assembly resolutions. Under one such resolution, the Assembly decided to convene the high-level Conference to review and assess the progress made in human rights since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to identify obstacles to further progress in that area.

Among the questions to be considered during the current session will be the agenda, dates and venue, rules of procedure, documentation and participation in the Conference. The meeting concludes on 10 April.

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